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## C.I.A. Says Agent Violated Oath By Publishing Book About Saigon

By SEYMOUR M. HERSH

The Central Intelligence Agency yesterday accused Frank Snepp, a former agent, of violating his security oath and his word by publishing an extensive analysis of the agency's role in South Vietnam without obtaining prior approval.

In a statement, the agency said that Adm. Stansfield M. Turner, the Director of Central Intelligence, met last May 17 with Mr. Snepp to discuss his book, which was then in progress. After Mr. Snepp promised to abide by his security oath and submit a copy of his finished work to the C.I.A. for clearance, the statement continued, Admiral Turner provided him with some unclassified materials.

Compounding the anger of some C.I.A. officials yesterday was the fact that the Government is apparently powerless to take any immediate sanctions against the Snepp book, a 580-page work that was edited and printed amid great secrecy by Random House. An article about the book was published yesterday in The New York Times.

### How Turner Found Out

In its statement, the C.I.A. said that Admiral Turner did not learn of the publication of Mr. Snepp's work "until he read descriptions of the book in today's newspaper."

Lawyers and others familiar with the agency's secrecy oath said yesterday that Mr. Snepp, by publishing his work without C.I.A. clearance, was not guilty of a crime. He would be guilty, they said, only if he turned classified information over to a foreign intelligence source, which would be a violation of the nation's espionage laws.

One possible sanction available to the C.I.A. yesterday was to seek a halt to the publication of the work, but a high-level official in the agency said that the agency had determined that more than 15,000 copies of the Snepp book were on their way to bookstores across the nation.

Mr. Snepp's book, titled "Decent Interval," deals with a series of alleged intelligence mistakes and misjudgments on the part of high officials of the Ford Administration that resulted in poor planning for the evacuation of Americans and Vietnamese allies from Saigon in the final days of the Vietnam war in April, 1975.

Mr. Snepp, who served at the time as the C.I.A.'s principal analyst of North Vietnamese affairs, specifically referred

to lack of planning as an "institutional disgrace" that resulted, he said, in the abandonment of thousands of South Vietnamese collaborators and intelligence operatives.

Late yesterday, the Justice Department confirmed that Griffin B. Bell, the Attorney General, had discussed the Snepp book with Admiral Turner.

In a statement, a department spokesman said that the matter had been referred to the civil division for further study. No immediate action against Mr. Snepp or the distribution of the book is being planned, a spokesman said.

Random House officials acknowledged that Mr. Snepp had deliberately misled Admiral Turner at their meeting in May. "Once he made the decision that it should be published," Robert L. Bernstein, the chairman and president of Random House, said of Mr. Snepp, "we agreed it should be published, as it was a responsible and lawful work."

One C.I.A. official who was present at the Snepp-Turner meeting in May told a reporter that Mr. Snepp "promised orally, without any qualification or hesitation, that he would provide us with a copy of the book."

### Author Not Available

"It's onething to go ahead and take your chances," he added heatedly, "but it's another thing to deliberately mislead."

Mr. Snepp could not be reached for comment yesterday.

At a series of meetings at the C.I.A. yesterday, high officials apparently decided not to permit agency personnel to respond to specific charges of wrongdoing in the Snepp book. One official who initially expressed willingness to discuss the book later told a newsmen that he could not do so.

William E. Colby, who was Director of Central Intelligence at the time of the fall of Saigon, told a reporter late Wednesday that he had discussed Mr. Snepp's complaints in mid-1975 and found them unsubstantiated.

"The question of when the evacuation should have been ordered has been hashed over and over," Mr. Colby, who is now in private law practice, said. "The fact is that 130,000 Vietnamese and all the Americans who wanted to get out."

Graham A. Martin, the last United States Ambassador to Saigon, who was also singled out for criticism by Mr. Snepp, defended his judgments in a telephone interview yesterday.

Speaking from Florence, Italy, where the retired State Department diplomat said that he was "picking some olives," he also said that more than 100,000 Vietnamese had escaped Saigon and added, "I think that fact is answer enough."

### Stands By Judgments

"On the whole," he said, "I think that the judgments I made at the time proved to be right."

Mr. Snepp, in his detailed account, accused Mr. Martin and others, including Henry A. Kissinger, who then was Secretary of State, of ignoring hard intelligence on North Vietnamese intentions in a futile last-ditch effort to negotiate coalition government in South Vietnam.

Mr. Snepp also said that the C.I.A. in effect covered up its evacuation failures later in 1975, and that, he said, forced him to resign and begin writing his book.

In its statement yesterday, the C.I.A. said, "Previous allegations concerning C.I.A. misconduct in Vietnam have been thoroughly investigated by the C.I.A." The agency offered to make copies of those investigations available to the Senate and House Intelligence Committees "for any use they want to make of it."